



[dot] gov-art

amanda jordan
iml 502
professor virginia kuhn
3 may 2017

[dot] gov art

This project attempts to visualize art institution data made available by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The IMLS was established in 1996 as an independent agency of the U.S. federal government. In 2014, the IMLS composed the Museum Universe Data File (MUDF), which exists as an “evolving list of museums and related organizations in the United States.” The MUDF includes data from IMLS administrative records, IRS records, and grant recipient information from private foundations. [dot] gov art uses the MUDF to gather information about art institutions throughout the U.S. Taking this information beyond the spreadsheet of the MUDF is critical for raising questions of access and influencing surrounding what [dot] gov art appears to be. It compels us to consider the murky line between the public and the private while approaching the perhaps murkier line between aesthetics and politics.

art institution, (*n.*)

The places and spaces that compile the portion of the MUDF specified here are described as art institutions. Albeit in nomenclature these places and spaces range from museums to galleries, with many variations in between, the title *art institution* is more inclusive. It establishes a connection between the IMLS' function as a government agency, the funding agencies that are often behind these places and spaces, and the way the public perceives the art that is presented.

The Oxford English Dictionary describes “institution” as “an establishment, organization, or association, instituted for the promotion of some object, esp. one of public or general utility, religious, charitable, educational, etc., e.g. a church, school, college, hospital, asylum, reformatory, mission, or the like” (OED “institution” 7.a.). “Art,” they purport, functions as “skill; its display, application, or expression” (OED “art” 1.). Broadly construed, art institution acts as a placeholder so we can begin to think about the places and spaces that populate the MUDF in the service of art.

[dot] gov art

museum universe data file (mudf)

The MUDF contains basic information on the approximately 35,000 museums located within the United States. [dot] gov art focuses on all entries with the discipline code 'ART,' which narrows the 35,000 entries to around 3,200. The final data set included the name, address, and 2013-2014 FY income and revenue for each art institution. From this data, [dot] gov art determines the number of art institutions within each of the fifty states in addition to Washington D.C., which is labelled as its own "state" as well.

sources

As for theoretical sources, to help conceptualize the history and role of the art institution I am working with Claire Farago and Donald Prezioso's *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*. Farago and Prezioso develop arguments around access with regard to art institutions, particularly the debate between public and private. I am using Alexander Galloway's *Interface Effect* to think about the concept of the interface with regard to art institution. Galloway's text is also useful for thinking about the final realization of [dot] gov art—a data driven installation. Martin Jay's 1992 article "The Aesthetic Ideology" as Ideology; Or, What Does It Mean to Aestheticize Politics?" pushes the aesthetics vs. politics debate forward, while Jacques Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics* helps me arrive at a synthesis of aesthetics and politics. For media-rich sources, I look to Guerrilla Girls work, roughly from 1993-2011, and Yoko Ono's collection of poetry and drawings *Acorn*. Guerrilla Girls are useful as methodological and graphic inspiration since their posters rely on visualization of data similar to what one finds in the MUDF. They seek out specific sets of data and represent them in simple posters to create narratives around their findings. These narratives have

political purpose within the art world and for those that surround it. Yoko Ono's collection is much more subtle than the posters created by Guerrilla Girls, yet, it deploys language and graphical representations to create subtly political prescriptions. Yoko Ono uses aesthetics in the service of her politics. [dot] gov art draws inspiration from these two varying figures with an intent of using graphic representation and language to create compelling narratives that take root in the findings of the MUDF. The following examples exemplify these qualities in the work from Yoko Ono and Guerrilla Girls, respectively.

LIFE PIECE VIII

A ghost was standing in a public toilet.

I suggested that he go up in the sky and be part of the light.

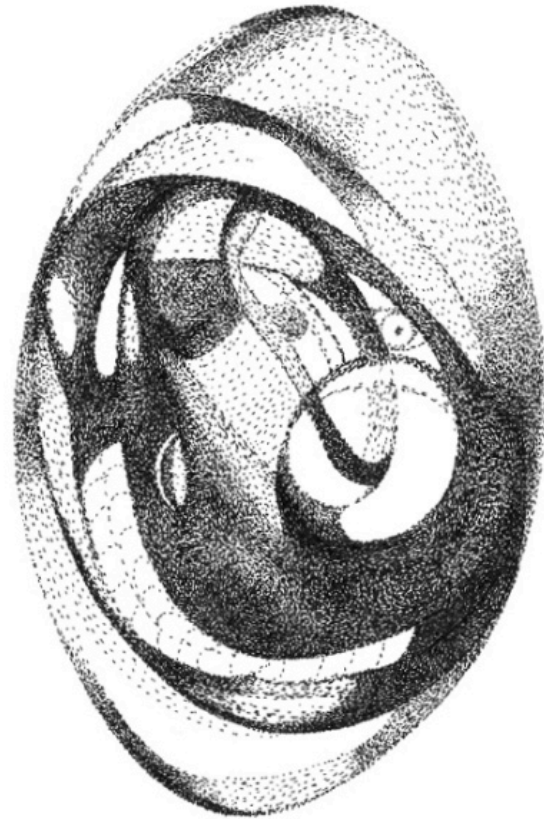
"I don't want to do that," he said.

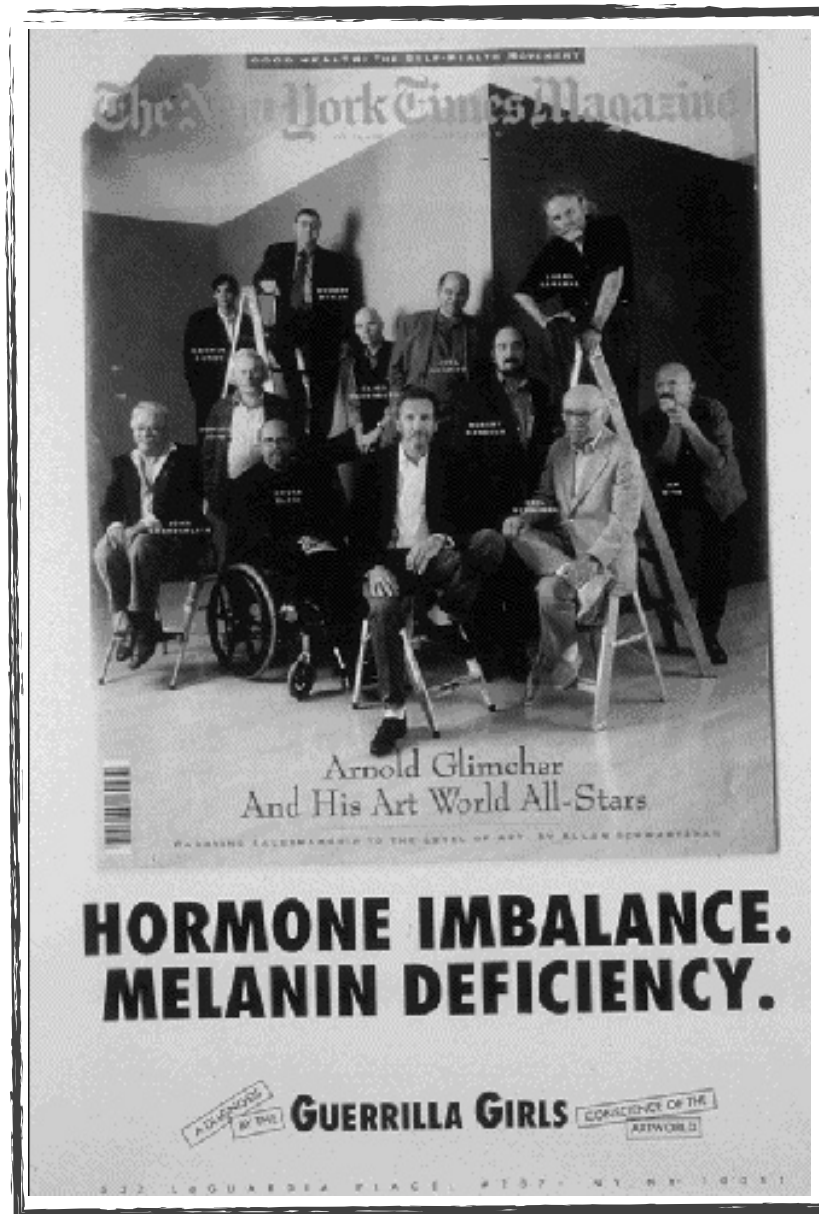
"Why?"

"Because I want to maintain my individuality."

I thought it was interesting that he would rather stand in the public toilet than join the light. Does he really treasure what he perceives as his individuality, or is he just simply afraid of making the move?

Tell us what your story is in staying where you are now in life.



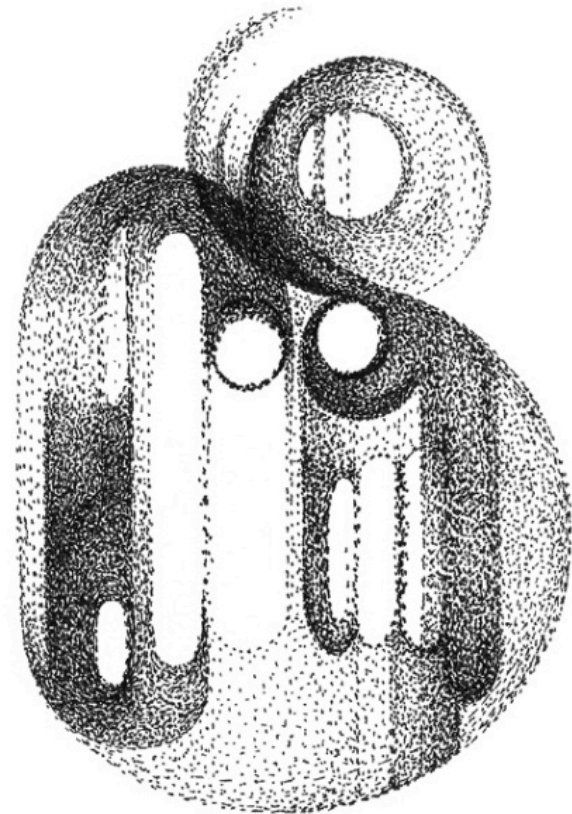


CITY PIECE I

Find a spot that is comfortable for you.

Keep the spot clean.

Think about the spot when you are away.



Yoko Ono, *Acorn*, 2013.

TOP TEN SIGNS THAT YOU'RE AN ART WORLD TOKEN:

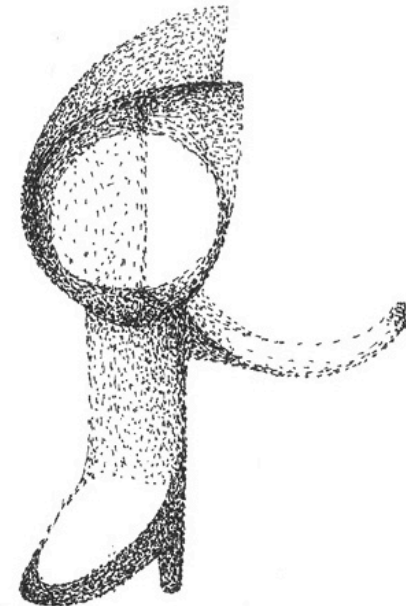
10. Your busiest months are February (Black History Month,) March (Women's History,) April (Asian-American Awareness,) June (Stonewall Anniversary) and September (Latino Heritage).
9. At openings and parties, the only other people of color are serving drinks.
8. Everyone knows your race, gender and sexual preference even when they don't know your work.
7. A museum that won't show your work gives you a prominent place in its lecture series.
6. Your last show got a lot of publicity, but no cash.
5. You're a finalist for a non-tenure-track teaching position at every art school on the east coast.
4. No collector ever buys more than one of your pieces.
3. Whenever you open your mouth, it's assumed that you speak for "your people," not just yourself.
2. People are always telling you their interracial and gay sexual fantasies.
1. A curator who never gave you the time of day before calls you right after a Guerrilla Girls demonstration.

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ARTWORLD
532 LOGUARDIA PLACE, #237, NY, NY 10012

SKY PIECE X

The sky is not only above our heads.
It extends all the way down to earth.
Each time we raise our foot from the ground,
we are walking in the sky.

Walk around the city with that awareness.
Check how long you walked in the sky today.



Yoko Ono, *Acorn*, 2013.



CONNECTION PIECE V

How do you connect with people the most?

With the feeling of:

Curiosity

Interest

Forgiveness

Adoration

Competition

Envy

Fear

Control

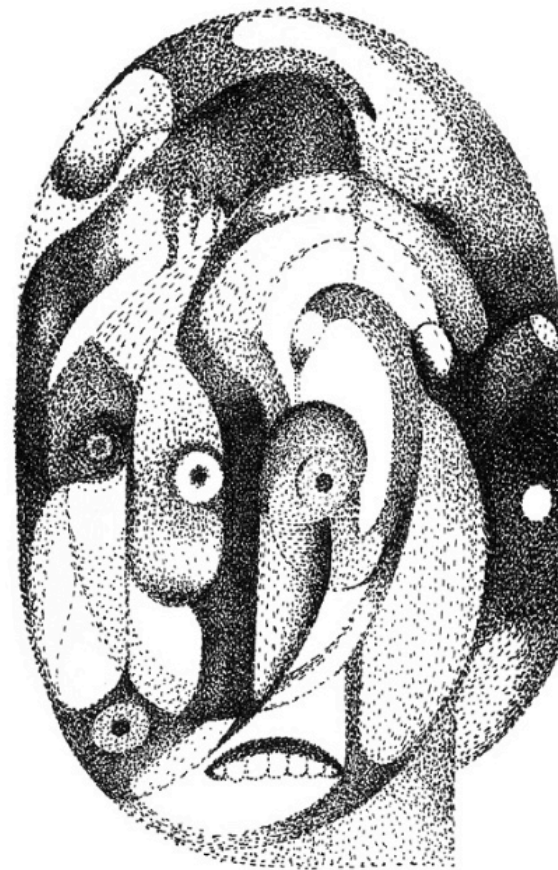
Detachment

Rejection

Make a list of people around you and see how it comes out.

Ask yourself if you are comfortable with the way you connect.

Don't simplify the situation by just saying "I love/hate them all."





Dearest Eli Broad,

It has come to our attention
that your Oh So Significant
art collection contains an
Insignificant number of
women and artists of color.

As a civic leader in a city as
diverse as L.A., you must feel
terrible about this!!! We are
sure you will rectify the
situation immediately.

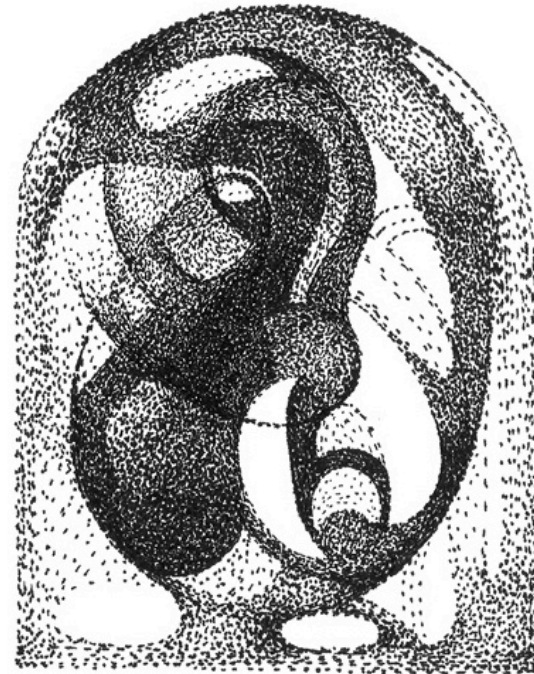
All our love,
Guerrilla Girls

Broad Contemporary Art Museum (BCAM) at LACMA: 30 artists, 97% white, 87% male
Broad Foundation collection: 194 artists, 96% white, 86% male

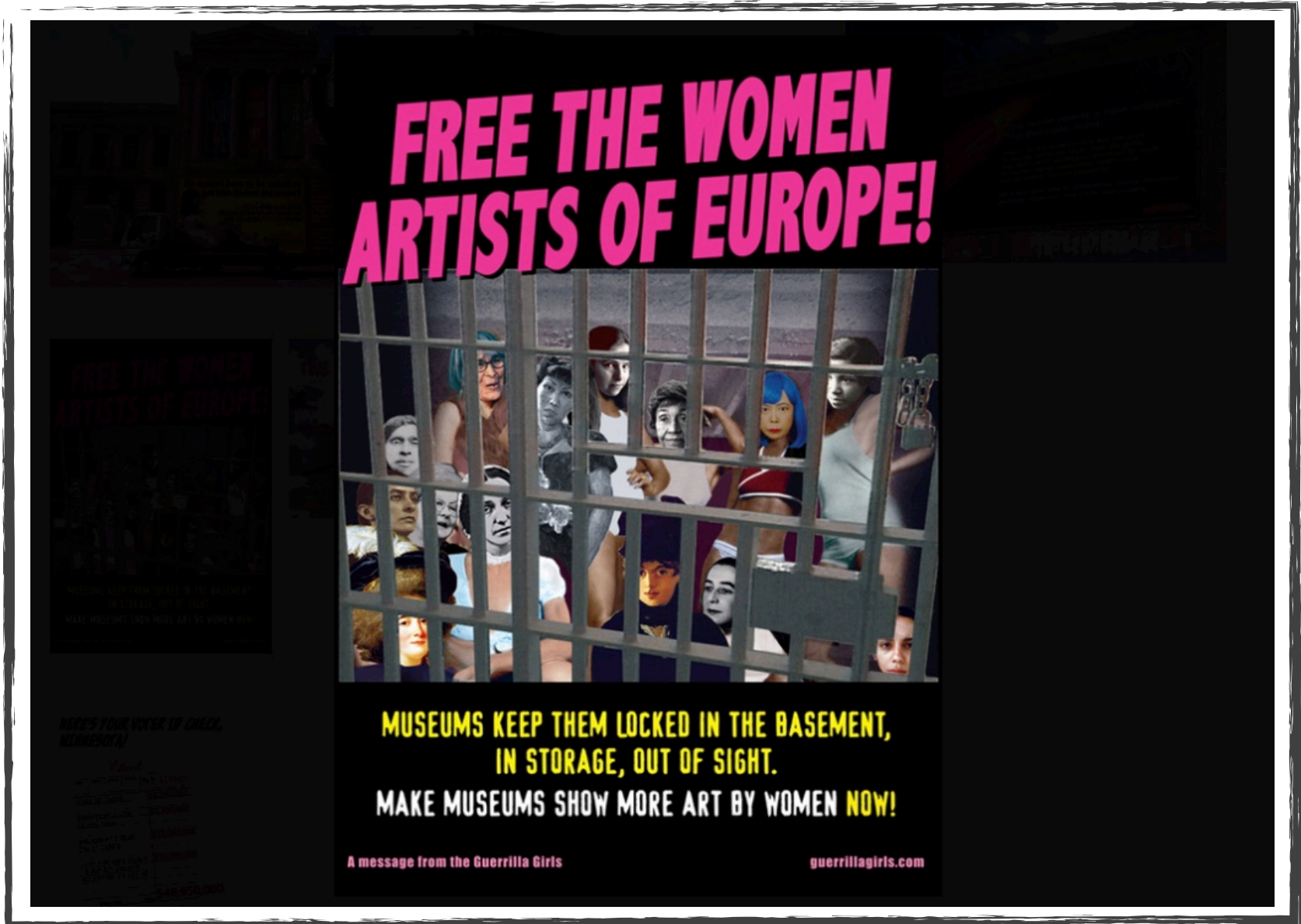
www.guerrillagirls.com

ROOM PIECE III

Think of your room as a prison.
Make the best of it and be proud.
Think of your room as a castle.
Invite people and share the joy.



Yoko Ono, *Acorn*, 2013.

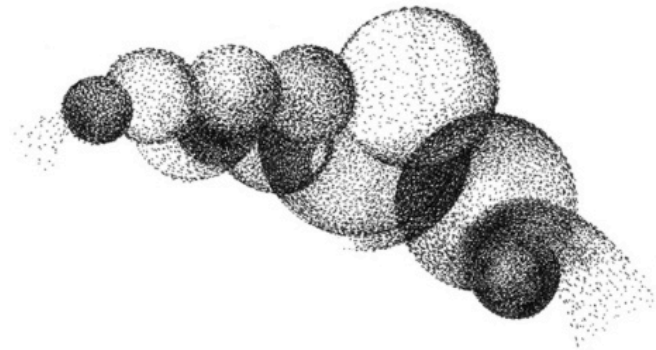


QUIZ I

Check the ones you think are right.

Yellow Talk

- a) All colours are imaginary except yellow. Yellow is the colour of the sun at its height. Other colours are shades of yellow in varying degrees. —Dr. Song
- b) Yellow is the only imaginary colour. —Dr. Suzuki
- c) Every colour has yellow in it. —Dr. Lee
- d) All colours are imaginary. —Dr. Kato



[dot] gov art

proposal

[dot] gov art proposes a data-informed installation that utilizes the MUDF to depart from that outlined theoretical and media-rich foundation. The steps that follow outline the beginning of the necessary work to realize this project.

[dot] gov art

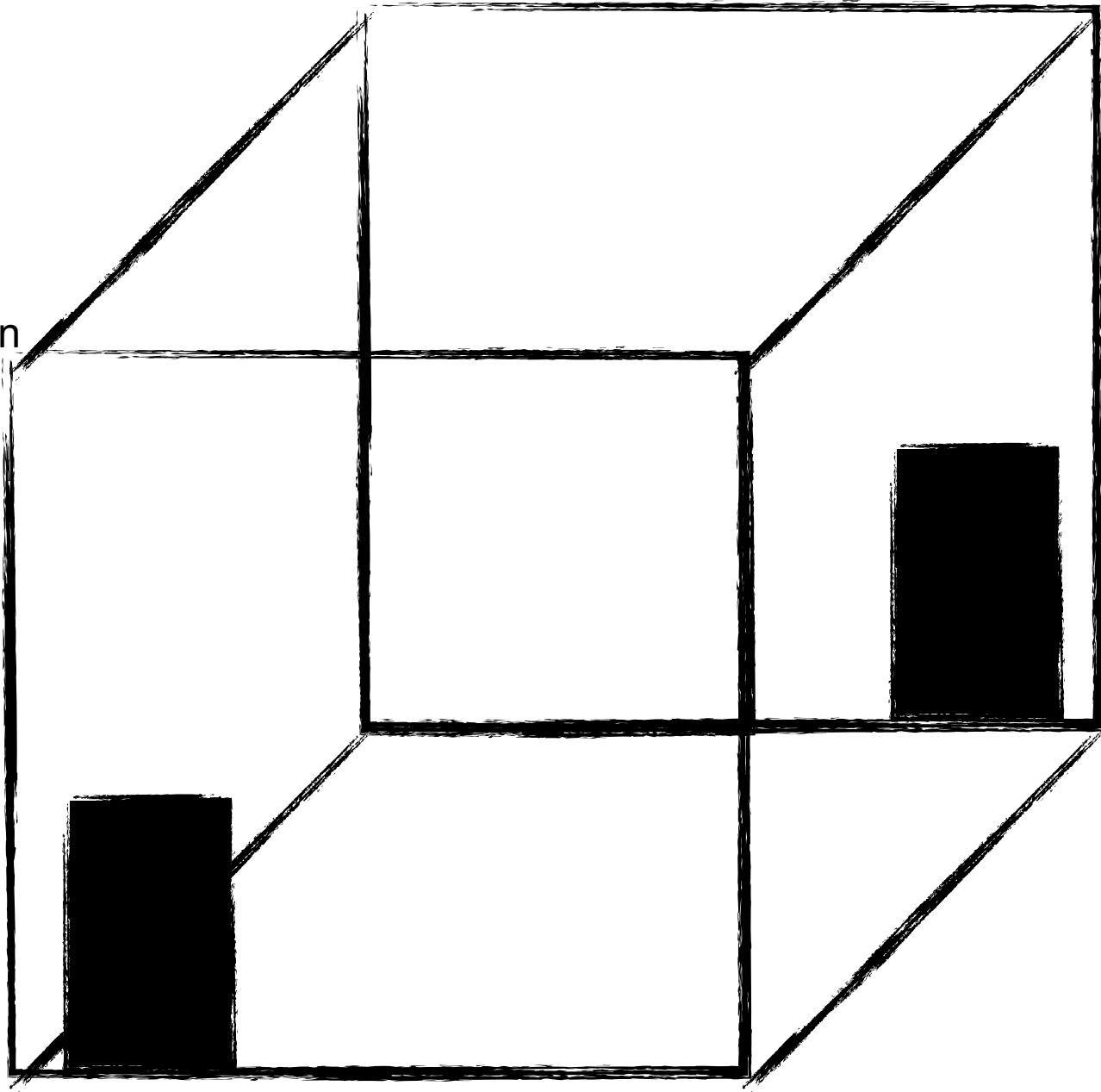
government agency art
aesthetics politics access
public private data
information quantification
qualification government
agency art aesthetics politics
access public private data
information quantification
qualification government
agency art aesthetics politics

coming soon to a
space and place
near you. expected
in the year 2020.

[dot] gov art

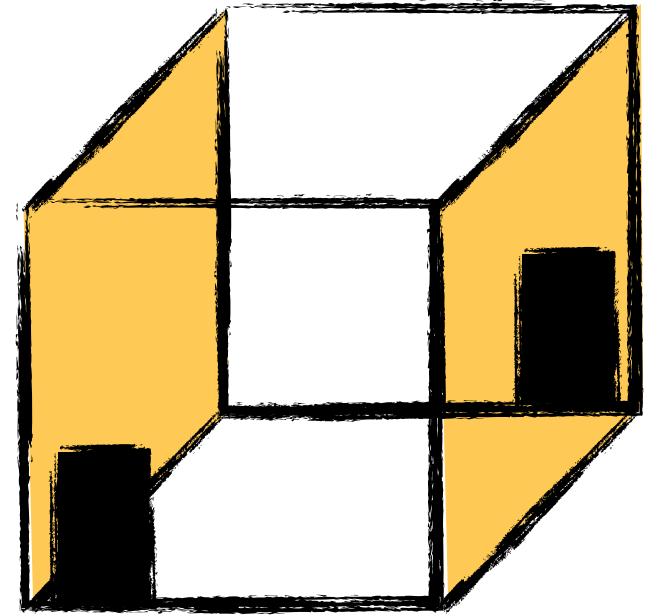
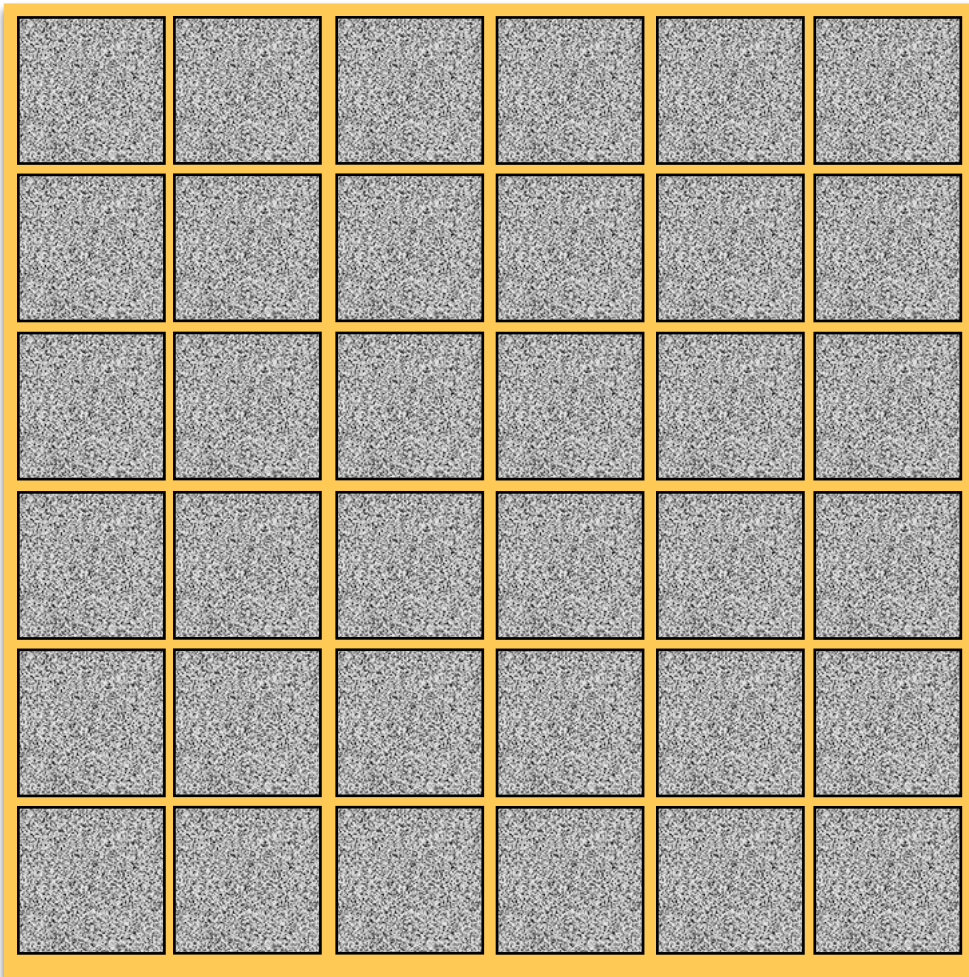
1.

[dot] gov art will be installed in a cube (or, dot) inspired space, wherein each surface is identical in length, width, and height to every other surface. The entrances to the space are marked by black rectangles, on opposite walls of the space. Each pair of opposite walls, those with doors and those without, will be designed similarly. This is to say that within each pair of walls, one will mirror the other in initial form.



2.

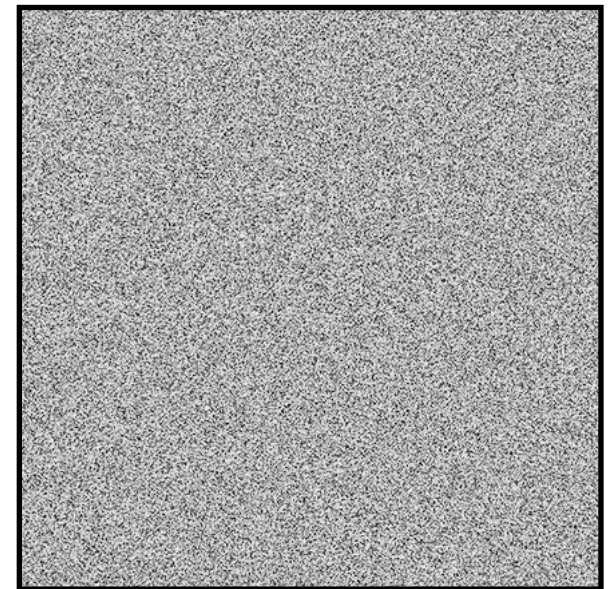
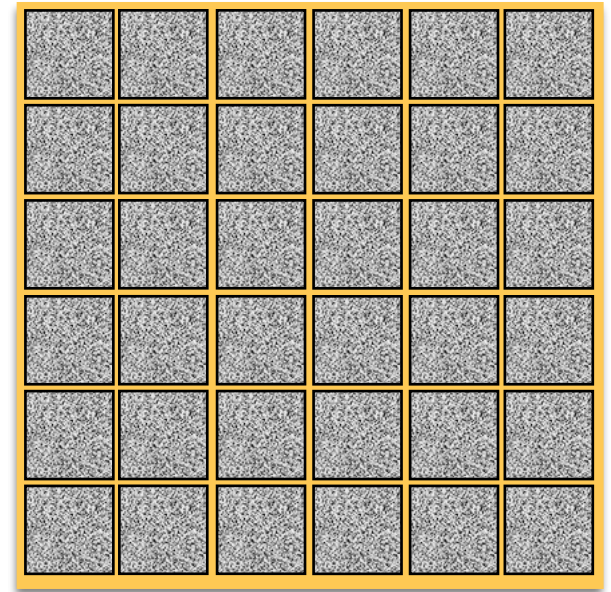
The two opposing yellow walls will be filled with interactive grids, as loosely drawn below.

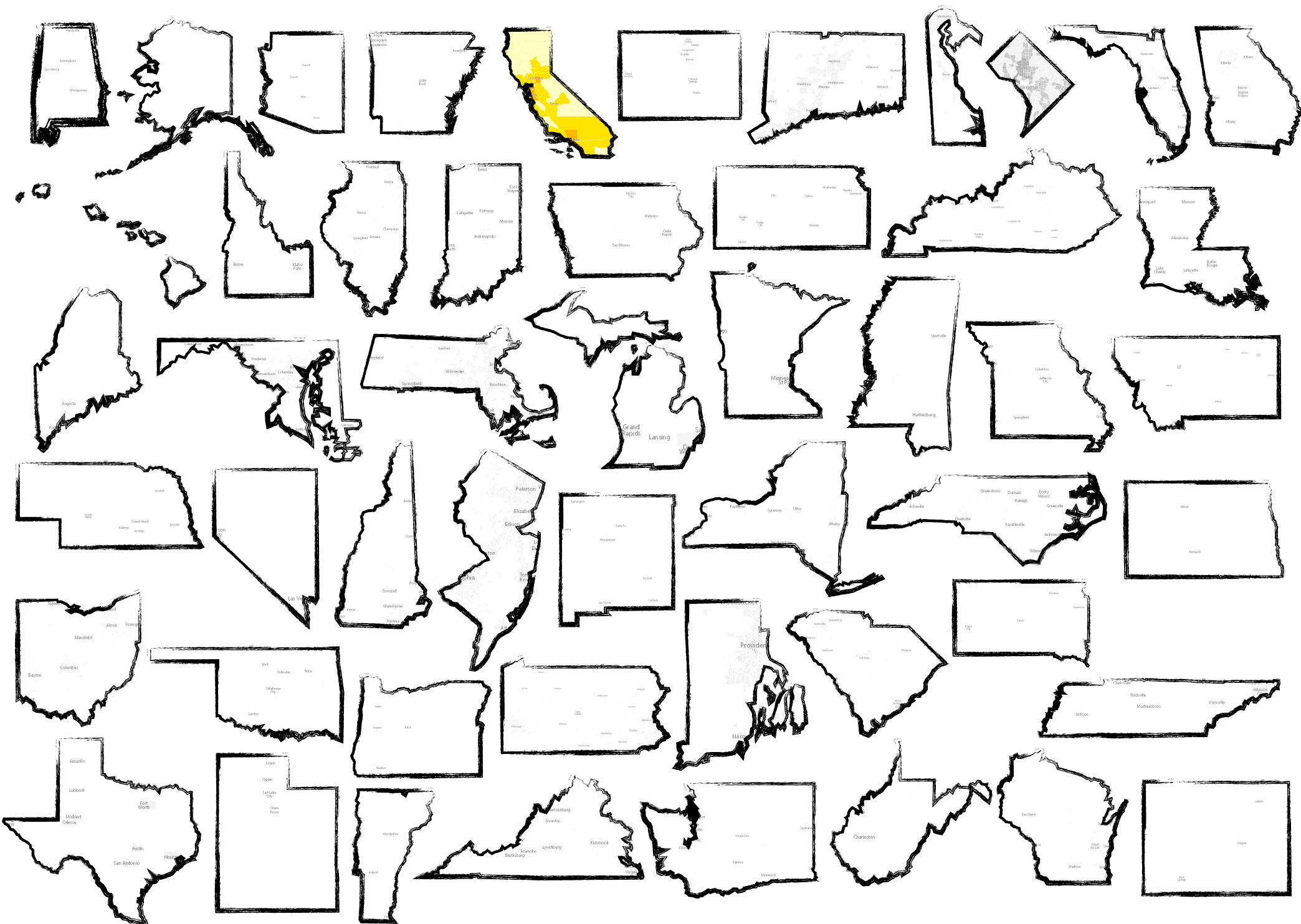


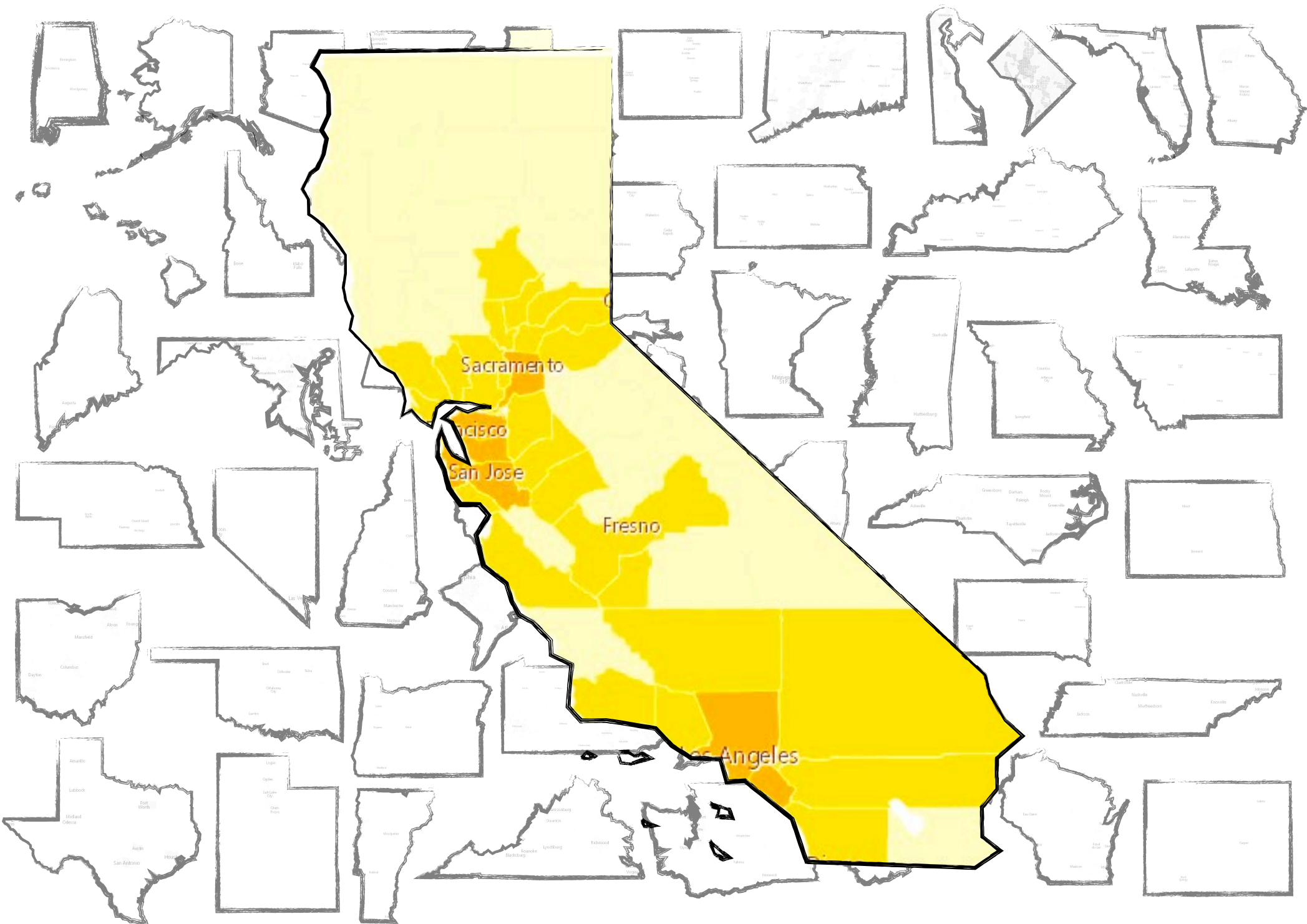
[dot] gov art

3.

Each grid square will circulate through 51 images that profile the quantity of art institutions in each “state” (all 50 U.S. states plus Washington D.C.) as reflected in the MUDF. For example, one single screen (bottom), as imaged in the interactive wall (top), will begin with a drawing of all 51 states. One state will be highlighted at a time. Once one is highlighted, the screen will present an enlarged image of that state and show the number of art institutions it has. The three drawings that follow imagine what these images will look like.







california

335

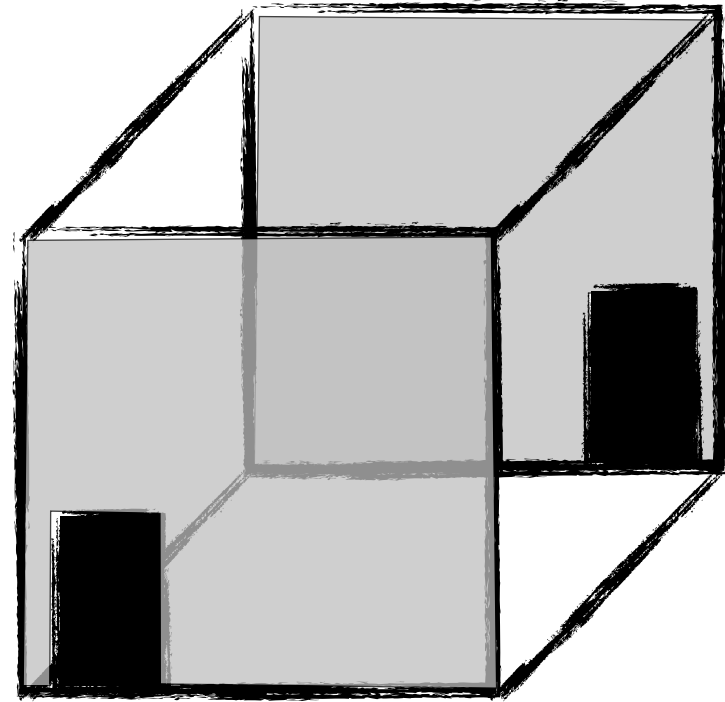
art

institutions



4.

The opposing walls (shown in gray in the diagram) wherein the doors are located will be filled with projected, rolling text that includes the breakdown of each state's art institutions. This breakdown consists of each art institution and their respective year of opening, their benefactors and endowments, their exhibition history and their curatorial history. This history will be demarcated as the years between 1995 and 2015. This 20 year period is important because the IMLS began in 1996 and currently in 2017, is at risk of being defunded and ultimately shut down. If we face the death of the IMLS, then we will certainly face the death of the MUDF and any updates therein. Thus, it will be crucial to document this 20 year period in order to compare it with any history prior to 1995 and any history after 2015.



5.

The center of the room will be filled with tablets atop tables with chairs so that viewers can sit at a table, pick up a tablet and scroll through a digitized text that permits them to isolate a particular state and view its art institution data in-depth. This is the close-reading companion to the scrolling text on the opposing walls gray walls.

In addition to focusing on specific art institutions through the digitized text, viewers could enter a specific artist or curator and view their history within the 20 year period described above. This historical glimpse enables viewers to track which art institutions have supported this artist or curator and what works and exhibitions have been organized around or by them.

[dot] gov art

to ∞ ...

The rest of the project's realization consists in publishing state-specific artist's books that catalogue the art institutions within each state and their respective activity over this 20 year period. By focusing on each state specifically, readers would be able to glimpse at the curatorial and economical logic that is driving each institution, each urban area, and the demographics of the states at large.

The cover of each book would follow each individual visualization depicted below. Thus, over 51 texts each image would be utilized to book-end a discussion of specific art institutions between 1995 and 2015. Each book would contain a broadside of it's respective cover image, and pages would develop from there to form narratives around each institution.

To complement these texts, readers will have access to the digitized texts that are accessible through the tablets in the exhibition space. This would be possible by making these digitized texts an open-access online archive.

